



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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PAUL G. REDINGTON DISCUSSES
U. S. WILD-LIFE PROBLEM

in
Addressing the 14th National Game Conference/session
at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City, December 5 and 6, under the auspices
of the American Game Protective Association, Paul G. Redington, chief of the
Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture covered the
field of the relations between sportsmen and game protectors and the govern-
mental agency concerned in the regulation of wild life. As leading considera-
tions, Mr. Redington mentioned the desirability of keeping politics out of the
administration of game affairs; of the need for research as a base for wise
regulation; of the progress of the "waterfowl census" now under way; of the
imperative need for prompt action in providing game refuges. He discussed the
surpluses of some animals and birds that may follow a protective policy, and
suggested the creation of public shooting grounds as one method of controlling
surplus; mentioned the need for antelope reservations similar to those for elk;
referred to the value of wild life for food and sport in Alaska; and to the
need for more interest on the part of American sportsmen in the game problem
of the territory; and urged organizations of sportsmen to give active and loyal
support to game wardens everywhere. Mr. Redington also referred to work that
is now under way in the Biological Survey program, and emphasized the perils
to various species of game and to man which exist in the recently discovered
tularemia, a bacterial disease carried by rabbits, squirrels and other animals,
and transmissible to man.

"I realize," said Mr. Redington, "that many organizations have sounded
their tocsin in favor of the elimination of politics from game administration,
and while many States by enactment have given greater liberality to their ap-
pointive or elective officers in the handling of game matters, there is still,
as you will acknowledge, some distance to travel along this line before we can
conclude that game administrators have a free hand to carry out their ideas."

He believed the Game Conference and all sportsmen should continue to stress this
point, that game or conservation commissioners should be chosen "without regard
to their political affiliations and solely for their ability and knowledge
within the field of wild-life conservation," that their executive officers
should hold office as long as they are competent and efficient, and should
have the right to select their assistants without regard to political influence.
"The executive officer and his assistants should be given the bulwark of civil
service protection."

As to the need for research, Mr. Redington said, "Without a knowledge of the life histories and habits of our birds and animals, the administrator will be working largely in the dark. While splendid progress has been made in wild life research, there is much yet to be done."

The disease called tularemia, Mr. Redington explained, was found in ground squirrels in 1911 and in jackrabbits in 1919. It is described as "debilitating, disabling, and frequently fatal." It is caused by an organism, *Bacterium tularense*, and in jack rabbits, snowshoe rabbits, and cottontail rabbits is responsible for epizootics that kill off these animals locally in great numbers. In the West, the disease is carried from animal to animal and to man, chiefly by the bites of infected deer flies and ticks. Man also becomes infected by handling rabbit carcasses when dressing them. He recommended a ten day quarantine for rabbits imported from infected districts. Several other animals are susceptible to the disease.

Referring to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Mr. Redington assured the sportsmen that unless an emergency should arise no important changes in shooting regulation would be recommended until more complete knowledge of the game situation had been obtained through the agency of the waterfowl census now under way. More than 2,300 volunteer cooperators are assisting the survey in this census.

"It is my firm conviction," the speaker emphasized, "that the sportsmen and bird lovers of this country have come to a place where they must 'fish or cut bait' on the matter of Federal refuges for migratory birds. The matter of legislation to benefit waterfowl is one that is distinctly up to those individuals and organizations who have really at heart the cause of these birds. That the Federal Government should to a greater extent redeem its obligations to Canada in the matter of providing sanctuaries for waterfowl is beyond quibble. Give the refuge program a chance to work; it may eventually preclude the imposition of more stringent restrictive measures."

Turning to the game surplus problem he mentioned that the Elk Commission had recommended that increase of the Yellowstone herd above the optimum number for the forage available should be disposed of, preferably by hunting, or if necessary by official killing. Similar principles might be laid down for other game and birds.

"The wild life conditions in the territory of Alaska deserve consideration at the hand of this conference," Mr. Redington asserted. "In that great possession of the United States is to be found a notable array of the big game mammals of the North American continent, as well as representatives of most of the fur-bearing animals. It is necessary to perpetuate wild game not only for sport but as food for Alaskan residents." He commented on the good reception of the three-year-old Alaskan game law. "Every year sees a larger number of sportsmen coming from all parts of the world to Alaska to secure game trophies, and the annual toll on such noted game animals as the mountain sheep, the mountain goat, and the brown bear is becoming heavier. If there was ever a chance given game administrators to put into effect a real game administration, it is in the territory of Alaska."

In closing, Mr. Redington made a plea "for the active support of the sportsmen and conservationists for the game wardens, county, State, and Federal. These men face a difficult task. They are likely to be shot down by game-law violators, and must not shoot except in self-defense, thus giving the outlaw all the advantage." He also spoke in appreciation of the cordial support the Biological Survey had received from sportsmen and conservationists, and from State game departments.